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Block, Karen, Elisha Riggs, and Nick Haslam, (eds). 2013. *Values and Vulnerabilities: The Ethics of Research with Refugees and Asylum Seekers*. Toowong, Australia: Australian Academic Press. CCXXII. 222. \$37.95.

Even as the population of refugees and asylum seekers globally has grown in recent decades, so too has the level of academic engagement with these populations. The eleven chapters of *Values and Vulnerabilities: The Ethics of Research with Refugees and Asylum Seekers* provide a multidisciplinary glimpse into the dilemmas of academic scholars as they design research projects involving refugees and asylum seekers, highlighting both general ethical principles as well as the practical decisions that researchers make as they navigate the different stages of research. Karen Block, Elisha Riggs, and Nick Haslam have assembled a group of papers that consider key ethical issues that arise in academic research projects: the paradoxes of vulnerability, issues of power and representation, and debates over credibility and bias in the blurred spaces between academic research and advocacy work. These debates have important theoretical and political implications because refugee and asylum seeker research takes place in such highly politicized national contexts and it has such important ramifications for policy development and advocacy strategies. While the theoretical pieces in this volume raise important issues for academics in this field, the highlights of the book include practical examples of projects that evolved to better meet the needs of research participants through ethical reflection and collaborative research practices.

The volume includes contributions primarily from psychologists and mental health practitioners, as well as an assortment of social scientists and interdisciplinary scholars, demonstrating the degree to which refugee and asylum seeker research crosses disciplinary boundaries as well as those dividing academic researchers and clinical practitioners. Nearly all of the authors are Australian, which lends a particular national focus to chapters addressing research guidelines and research ethics committees, yet the politicized context in which these authors write will be familiar to readers in the US, Canada, and throughout Europe where forced migration issues have similar visibility. With its critical engagement of the academic research process, this book will be of interest to a primarily *academic* audience, including scholars of international migration, forced migration, and human rights law, although practitioners outside of academia with experience collaborating with academic scholars will gain insight into the hurdles that academic researchers face in designing research projects. This volume would be a particularly valuable resource for scholars navigating the research approval process in a university setting. Chapters are concise and succinctly written, and would be a valuable resource for students of any of the above fields, especially in courses about research design and methodology.

Woven throughout many of the contributions in this volume is an expansive and important critique of the implicit assumptions about refugees within the research process. What work, they ask, do assumptions that equate refugee status with vulnerability and victimhood do? Sandy Gifford interrogates the conflicting values about refugees from ethics committees, researchers, and people with refugee experience, noting that 'refugeeness' is often assumed to be a permanent category of vulnerability rather than a temporary experience. Hariz Halilovich echoes this observation, adding that recognition of the power relations within research projects does not mean treating refugees as powerless victims. Jeanette Lawrence et al. also critique assumptions

about vulnerability, suggesting that recognition and respect help to combat ideas about the 'generic informant.' Marinella Marmo argues that refugees are paradoxically perceived as both 'victims' and 'offenders,' and this tension colors the research process. Christopher McDowell asks why displacement is so often conflated with vulnerability, arguing that refugees in camps provide an inaccurate paradigm for a range of types of forced migration. Together, these pieces offer important corrections to research frameworks that overemphasize powerlessness, victimhood, and vulnerability of refugees and asylum seekers, obscuring the voice and agency of research participants in the process.

Two practical areas of focus in this collection are the academic research ethics committee and the specific elements of ethical research projects. Many pieces pay particular attention to navigating the academic research process within a (primarily Australian) university setting, illustrating how research ethics committee guidelines, experts, and approval bodies shape scholarship. Lynn Gillam, Gifford, and Lawrence et al all frame research through the formal ethical guidelines provided by ethics committees or research institutions. Marmo and Louise Newman focus on the relationship between ethical research and academic standards, and issues raised by academic publishing feature in pieces by Deborah Zion and Eileen Pittaway with Linda Bartolomei.

Specific research practices: informed consent, benefit issues/ power limits of researchers, confidentiality, transparency, places of captivity, overuse or use of trauma framework, inclusion of participants in research design, voice, justice and advocacy

Highlight two specific standout chapters: Halilovich, Pittaway

Critiques: very focused on Australian context, what about issues elsewhere: shows the extend of refugee issues worldwide to even have to ask this question. very engaged within research ethic frameworks... what about independent researchers, advocates, etc? How does the 'given' of the research ethics committee shape possibilities and foreclose options? On the other hand, gives good advice and sources for navigating research ethics committees for other academics. Best chapters SHOW practical works in progress for dealing with challenges, rather than TELL. NO FUNDERS

People navigating research approval processes

So many guidelines and ethics within research approval frameworks, less practical advice

Critiques: 2

Accomplishes: 4

Three central themes noted by editors: vulnerability, power, and the relationship between research and advocacy.

Paradox of vulnerability

Who speaks for the refugee: voice?

Credibility, bias, access

Speaking to researchers, health professionals, and others who produce knowledge / have scientific authority

Contributors: all Australian, aside from one Canadian and one person from the UK.

Disciplinary mix: dominated by psychologists and psychiatrists (5), with a smattering of public and mental health researchers and practitioners (3), social scientists (5), and researchers focused on ethics, criminal justice, and children (3).

Ethical frameworks and key concepts

Chapter 1. Block, Riggs, and Haslam, Introduction

Goal to look at general principles (such as guidelines by Refugee Studies Centre in Oxford) in practice and embed them in intellectual context

Multidisciplinary

Vulnerability: Refugees as circumstance not quality within the person

Power: research vs. researchers, issues informed consent, cross-cultural

Research and advocacy:

Ethical frameworks and key concepts: lens that informs design of research

Methodological approaches: appropriate methods

Advocacy and research

Chapter 2. Gillam

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, Human research ethics committees not necessarily well equipped to interpret guidelines for refugee and asylum seeker research

Informed consent problematic: voluntariness possible? And benefits to person overestimated? Or risks underestimated?

Suggests an organization or professional body dedicated to this type of research to provide expert advice to HRECs and that they need to work together collaboratively with researchers

Chapter 3. Gifford

Values that shape our judgments about the ethics of research with refugees—participants become lost in values culture debates between HREC, researchers

Illegality of research in some spaces: HRECs risk colluding with state power and abuse

Institutional ethics committees focus on refugee status above all else, need to protect, idea that

ALL need trauma counseling all the time

Service providers and organizations: gatekeepers, protectors

Researchers: tensions between disciplinary standards, legitimate illegal action (53), advocacy

People with refugee experience: challenge essentialized and naturalized refugee, once a refugee always a refugee

Methodological approaches to ethical research

Chapter 4. McDowell

Explicit assumption: lack ability to protect themselves, why is the norm in ethics review procedures to equate displaced with vulnerable? Refugees in camps provide the paradigm for a range of forced migration situations. Asylum seeker: between danger, flight and sanctuary and migrant making rational choices. Closes door on agency in asylum choices, also places and events in-between country of origin and destination. Problematize with environmental and development refugees. Confidentiality, Transparency, verbal consent, justifying research on basis of benefit very problematic because have little to gain, privacy and autonomy in places of captivity impaired. Need more stringent guidelines in that case.

Chapter 5. Marmo

Dominant researcher and weaker research subject. Shouldn't turn project into social activism. Higher academic standards hard to satisfy at micro level. Asylum seeker as victim and offender. Researcher dominant. Not a very compelling chapter. Disciplinary? Criminologist.

Chapter 6. Lawrence, Kaplan and McFarlane

Children and young people, respect important. Vulnerability: can't only see refugee youth as displaced and suffering. Compares several guidelines that regulate policies and practices of ethical research. Excellent questions, I add, about intuitional language and values, less for real community needs. Respect and recognition. How to implement? No generic informant, acknowledge this. Include young people participants in process. Preserve right to voice.

Chapter 7. Halilovich

Commissioned research: to deal with 'problems' generated by refugees

Being a refugee not as a individual or collective identity but temporary state

Avoid overuse of trauma, pathologization

"As Sanford (2006, p. 14) argues, "activist scholarship reminds us that all research is inherently political." (132)

recognize power relations without treating people as powerless victims, be candid about limits of influence. Interpreters role as collaborator in research process.

Methods: participatory action research, empowerment of participants: examples of Bosnians living in Australia: formed teen group to bring people together, form women's group—both examples of changing research methods to become more participatory, publications wanted to use real names as memorial to survivors, writing as inherently political act. GOOD examples here.

Chapter 8. Pittaway and Bartolomei

Research that does not have advocacy outcome could be considered uneithical

Refugees: tired of constant requests to participate in research projects with little or no benefit to them, disclosure put individuals and communities in danger, distrust, fear of exploitation, wanted outcomes but distrusted process. Who has CONTROL of data collected, any benefit of participation? = two main issues

Breaches of confidentiality, lack of feedback, mistrust of researchers who have no cultural understandings of how people live, 'fly in fly out' research, concerns for mental health, fail to recognize refugees' agency and voices.

Developed reciprocal research/ community consultation to meet some of these challenges.

Evolving methodology: assistance that researchers could provide clearly explained, things they can and cannot do. Confidentiality: all materials are property of participants, can only be used with their permission. Sending materials back, build into project planning. Process: human rights training, story circles to identify problems, storyboarding to analyze and create proposals for action—recognizes the skills and knowledge of participants. Great example! Not quick and easy.

Advocacy and politics

Chapter 9. Newman

Research challenges of politicized issue of detention, research on mental health has played a big role in political debates. Clinicians in ethical dilemma, vicarious trauma, conflict with government, criticism of academic bias, cannot be value free.

Chapter 10. Zion

Ethical issues of hearing dangerous or stigmatizing information: participants at risk of betrayal.

Ethics of non-participant information. Not to interview asylum seekers themselves, but people who work with them: pragmatic and ethical concerns, researchers were barred, and informed consent issues in detained populations AND refugees just because (why?) Coercive spaces.

Would publication help? Or would it be better to communicate with organizations or persons who could assist rather than open publication?

Chapter 11. Aidani

Iranian sympathy with Iranian asylum seekers, Levinas and ethics: researchers are limited if they are not informed by a 'cultural memory' of individuals' narrative. Need to move beyond simply saying there is an 'ethical dilemma' and respond to suffering "not just with compassion but with social and political justice" (219)